B.C. Post-Secondary Admissions Information: High School Counsellor Perspectives

March 2003

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BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON
ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER
SUPPORTING BC'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Final Report: B.C. Post-Secondary Admissions Information: High School Counsellor Perspectives

This report was prepared by
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BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

SUPPORTING BC's EDUCATION SYSTEM

PREAMBLE

We are happy to provide you with a copy of one of our recent publications: "B.C. Post-Secondary Admissions Information: High School Counsellor Perspectives."

This paper is the result of investigations conducted by Jennifer Orum, currently seconded to the BCCAT office. She surveyed high school counsellors to solicit their views as to the sources, clarity and effectiveness of information available to high schools about admission requirements at B.C. post-secondary institutions. The findings, and Jennifer's recommendations, will be of interest to anyone involved in this area of education.

The results of this survey help to illuminate several issues, and point to some areas that would benefit from further investigation. *However, due to the relatively small number of responses, they cannot be interpreted as definitive statements about post-secondary admission information.* BCCAT, therefore, presents the findings for your information, but does not suggest that they represent a comprehensive review or analysis of admissions information in the province.

Frank Gelin
Executive Director and Co-Chair

23 September, 2003

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1. Background

The British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer's informal contacts in the secondary school system in the province have suggested that there may be a need for an integrated description of various admissions requirements for B.C. post-secondary institutions. The BCCAT 2002 - 2003 Proposed Plan of Activities and Projects included a plan to investigate the extent to which this is perceived to be an important issue that needs to be addressed in the future. This plan was approved by the Council at their June 2002 meeting.

2. Survey Process

It was decided that this investigation should involve surveying the opinions of high school counselors and thus a survey form was developed to obtain input on how counselors and students access admissions information on B.C. post-secondary institutions and what problems they face in doing so. A copy of the survey form is provided in Appendix A.

The form was created in e-mail format and circulated on the B.C. School Counsellors' Association list-serve December 9, 2002 by Association President Bill Forst. A reminder was sent to the list-serve on January 8, 2003.

Twenty-three responses were received, representing 18 of the 60 School Districts in the province, and approximately 10% of secondary schools that offer Grade 11 and 12. See Appendix B for the distribution of survey responses. Respondents were given the option of completing and submitting the survey form, or telephoning to provide personal feedback. Two of the respondents chose the latter.

3. Summary of Responses

A review of the survey questions follows, together with examples of respondent comments selected to be representative of the full range of responses received. The respondent's location (indicated as an area of the province) is included for each comment. The text of all responses can be found in Appendix C.

Question 1: What are your most common sources of information on admissions requirements for B.C. post-secondary institutions? What difficulties, if any, do you experience in locating or accessing these sources?

The main sources of information include (number represents frequency mentioned):

Post-secondary institutions:

Websites	18
Calendars	14
Viewbooks	4
Mini-calendars	3
Other publications	3
Advisors/Admissions staff	3
Posters	1

Computer programs/websites:

openingdoorsbc.com	4
Choices	4
Choices USA	1
Career Cruising	1
Who Offers What (WOW)	2

Other:

Counsellor PS Days	2
PS/Career nights	2
Spectrum publications	2

The main problems/issues mentioned include:

(1) Resource material not updated frequently enough;

(2) Calendars seem in short supply, are often hard to obtain, cost money, have differing formats and are difficult to read and locate information needed;

(3) Post-secondary websites are difficult and time-consuming to navigate and find needed information. Many seem to find university websites not user friendly.

Respondent comment:

"University websites are not user friendly. Too much information - there are links to everything conceivable, but hard to navigate and it takes too much time to find what you're looking for." *(Greater Vancouver)*

Question 2: What types of problems do your students face in locating or accessing information on admissions requirements?

The problems faced by students appear to be similar to those faced by counselors, as described above. Additional issues mentioned include:

(1) Some students are not comfortable using computers, while others live in areas where the technology is outdated, slow, frustrating, and/or poorly maintained;

(2) Some students don't seem to know about the various sources of information, and the most efficient and effective places to look; they don't consider all the post-secondary routes available to them nor identify second and third alternatives;

(3) Post-secondary publications and other resources are often difficult for students and parents to understand and interpret; some students find the information overwhelming;

(4) Some students are too busy or unmotivated to access available information, and for this group the shorter publications such as mini-calendars are preferred; some leave the information search very late, waiting until they are close to graduating;

(5) When students want to contact post-secondary staff to check information, they sometimes find this difficult to accomplish, being referred back to the website.

Respondent comments:

"The single biggest reason the students have difficulty is that they view the maze of information as 'too difficult to understand', rather than acting as a 'curious detective'. Some students find it overwhelming as they are not used to exploring and researching information in a variety of ways." *(Fraser Valley)*

"Students tend to get a large amount of incorrect information about admissions from parents and other students. There are many 'myths' and incorrect 'beliefs' circulating, and this misinformation is persistent, even when correct information is provided to them by the school. It is as important that parents are given accurate admissions information as it is to have the students well informed. Generally students and parents believe that GPA cutoffs for admission to the universities are higher than they actually are." *(Greater Vancouver)*

'Working in a rural school our students are underexposed to technology, both at school and at home. Our technology is slow, frustrating and poorly maintained, therefore students give up quickly when trying to answer questions." *(Southern Interior)*

Question 3: Is the information on admissions requirements available at times students need it to make high school course selection decisions? If not, explain the difficulties with the timing of information.

Most responses indicated that information is available in a timely manner, although there is a general concern that accurate information needs to be available to students early (i.e. Grade 10), particularly with the recent announced changes to high school graduation requirements and the 'streaming' that will occur in senior secondary school grades. Problems that were identified include:

(1) While the information is available, students aren't always ready to look at the information and plan far enough ahead;

(2) Lead time on changes to admissions requirements may be too short, given that students need to make course decisions in Grade 10;

(3) While students need information on GPA cutoffs at the beginning of Grade 12 (in September), post-secondary institutions tend to circulate it later in the year;

(4) Post-secondary institutions bring information when they do secondary school visits, but in some cases this may be after the application deadlines or recommended application submission dates.

Respondent comments:

"Grade 12 students should have information on GPA cutoffs at the beginning of their final high school year - in September. The post-secondary institutions tend to circulate it to schools later in the year. Items such as how admissions averages are calculated need to be dealt with when students are in Grade 10. *(Greater Vancouver)*

"A couple of times a change [in admission requirements] was made in the spring for the following September and we only found out by accident." *(Greater Victoria)*

Question 4: Explain any problems you or your students have in understanding the information circulated by B.C. post-secondary institutions on their admissions requirements.

Students seem to be confused by the terminology used by post -secondary institutions and many of the key concepts in the admissions process.

(1) Students often don't understand university/post-secondary jargon (*e.g.* 'transcript', 'PEN number', 'upper & lower division', 'conditional acceptance');

(2) There appears to be confusion around the concepts of 'pre-requisites' and 'co-requisites', and students often need assistance to identify high school courses needed to access particular post-secondary courses;

(3) Students have significant problems understanding course credits/units, the way admissions averages are calculated, and particularly the GPA 'minimum' cutoffs versus 'actual' admission GPA's at universities and other post-secondary institutions';

(4) There is some confusion regarding second language requirements and 'waivers', English proficiency requirements and tests (*e.g.* TOEFL);

(5) Calendars have differing formats, making it harder for students to identify and compare admissions requirements.

Respondent comments:

"The jargon used to describe pre-requisites, credits, co-requisites, etc. is not consistent between institutions. I make up an alphabetical list of 'post-secondary institution terms' for students and parents to use." *(Fraser Valley)*

"Students have problems understanding that the percentage required for admission is not known until after the application for admission deadline. They can be confused with the term 'conditional acceptance', focusing on the word 'acceptance', rather than realizing the nature of the 'conditions.' Universities need to do more to make it clear that early admission does not necessarily mean tha. a student will receive final admission, based on the entering average cutoff determined in August. For example, one university includes a warning with early admissions that refers to the possibility that a student will not actually have their admission confirmed - but it is in very small print." *(Greater Vancouver)*

"Each calendar is set up differently, so it is difficult to pinpoint requirements. Students have also come back to say that specific courses will often have prerequisites tha t weren't listed in the program requirements section." *(South-eastern B.C.)*

Question 5: Do you or your students find the differences in admission requirements among B.C. post-secondary institutions easy to understand? If not, explain the problems encountered.

The differences in admission requirements appear to be relatively easy for students to understand. Some exceptions mentioned by respondents:

(1) While students find the differences between institutions easy to understand, understanding *why* there are admissions differences, particularly those within the same program (*e.g.* B.Sc.), is more difficult;

(2) Students are sometimes confused about pre-requisites when starting at a college, then transferring to a university;

(3) There appears to be some confusion regarding the differences related to applied courses and general courses (*e.g.* Math).

Respondent Comment:

"They are mostly easy to understand once you find them!" *(North-eastern B.C.)*

Question 6: How difficult do you or your students find keeping up with the changes in post-secondary admissions requirements?

Counsellors appear to be able to keep up with changes, but it is very time- consuming due to the large amount of information and the multiple sources. The updates received directly from the post-secondary institutions are found to be very helpful. The slower rate of change at universities is easier to keep up with than changes at other post-secondary institutions that don't give as much lead time.

Respondent comment:

"Sometimes institutions change requirements from one year to the next. I think it would be more helpful if they would give two years of lead-time in order that students can choose their courses. Sometimes students are struggling to meet a science or language requirement only to find that it is dropped. Other times students discover that they need higher marks in subjects. Most students make their subject choices in February/March of their Grade 10 year, so a two or three year lead time on changes would help them. " *(Fraser Valley)*

Respondent Suggestions for Admissions Information

Many respondents gave suggestions regarding what formats are most useful for both students and themselves, and a large number mentioned it would be advantageous to have information more coordinated.

Respondent comments:

"It would be great to see a summarized admission requirement chart that contained the information for all of BC post-secondary institutions."
(South-eastern B.C.)

"I would like a comprehensive handout that includes general entrance requirements that could be used for a ready reference." *(Greater Vancouver)*

"I can generally find what I want but it would be more convenient if they all used a standardized system of categorizing information and displaying it." *(South Coast)*

"It would seem that hands-on, mini-booklets providing a brief synopsis are the way to go. Simple to use and easy to understand." *(Southern Interior)*

"Charts and bold headings seem to work the best." *(Southern Interior)*

"It is too bad, but sometimes I think it would be a good idea for all institutions to send out changes together so they are all available at once." *(Southern Interior)*

"I don't have time to research new changes all the time and would like a mail-out sent each year of an update of all institutions and their requirements on one page." *(Greater Vancouver)*

"I think that one organizing body could help by making a chart that's easy to understand. It would be helpful if all of the institutions would submit their requirements to BCCAT so that [it] could prepare a chart that would be available online or distributed to schools. " *(Fraser Valley)*

"At our school we prepare a chart with admissions information, and this is used as a template by all the secondary schools in the District. It would be wonderful if such a resource were produced at a provincial level, since this would prevent each school/area from having to contact each of the universities/colleges to get updates. A central resource, providing comparative information in a standardized format would make it easier for

students and their parents, as well as secondary school counsellors and post-secondary admissions/recruiting/counselling staff." *(Greater Vancouver)*

" Some students find the websites hard to negotiate - a standardized style would simplify it for them." *(South Coast)*

"It would be nice if there was ONE website that was continually updated by the institutions that we could access." *(Greater Vancouver)*

"It is too time consuming to get all the new information in a singular manner. www.openingdoorsbc.com would be fine, but why not attach it to PASBC?" *(Greater Vancouver)*

4. Summary of Issues

While the Survey responses suggest that admissions information needed by counsellors, students and their parents is available, some problems were identified:

1. A considerable amount of misinformation is circulating among students and their parents, and it is sometimes difficult to replace 'myth' with reality.

2. In some cases, resource material may not be updated frequently enough.

3. Changes in admission requirements are sometimes announced with too little lead time to allow timely decisions on high school course selection.

4. The differing formats of various print-based and web-based sources make finding and comparing admissions information difficult.

5. The use of post-secondary 'jargon' creates challenges for students and parents.

6. There is a substantial amount of confusion among students and their parents about a number of key concepts and processes, particularly 'conditional admission', 'pre-requisites and co-requisites', 'course credit systems', and GPA 'minimum' versus 'actual' cutoffs.

7. The process of locating needed information is time-consuming for students, parents and counselors.

8. The volume and complexity of admissions information available can be overwhelming.

9. Some students are not motivated to do the detective work required to identify information they need.

10. Post-secondary institution websites are not user-friendly in some cases.

11. Some post-secondary institutions rely on their websites to provide information, and have limited 'real person' help available for students needing personal help.

12. Some students, particularly in rural areas, have problems using websites because they do not have access to up-to-date technology or they don't have the web skills needed to search information effectively.

5. Recommendations

a) Standardized presentation of admissions information

If would be very helpful if there was more consistency/standardization in the way in which post-secondary institutions present their admissions information, in both their print or web-based publications. This will not only save time for those needing the information, but it would facilitate students and their families analyzing their options.

b) Concise and comprehensive summary

There appears to be a need to have some form of concise summary of admissions information for *all* B.C. institutions, in a simple to use format such as a chart, issued in a timely manner, and updated regularly. This would be supplemental to the searchable-type of data available through resources such as www.openingdoorsbc.com.

A review could be made of similar resources available, both in B.C. (*e.g.* the information issued by Moscrop Secondary for SD # 41 Burnaby) and in other jurisdictions such as Ontario where the Ontario Universities' Application Centre distributes standardized admissions information on universities in a newspaper format in conjunction with their University Application Package.

c) A web-based resource

Consideration could be given to having both print and web-based versions of an admissions summary, and locating the web version on a provincial resource such as BCCAT's or PASBC's websites or www.openingdoorsbc.com (with links to other websites). The advantage of a web-based version is the ease of updating, and the capability of making it available in a downloadable pdf format for printing hard copies.

d) Addressing confusion with admissions/post-secondary concepts and jargon

Whatever form is used to provide a comprehensive, easy-to-use summary of admissions information, consideration could be given to including a glossary of terms and key concepts.

6. Proposed Follow-up Research

a) Student input

A similar survey of high school students would provide very useful supplementary information to that given by school counsellors. The resources available through 'Student Voice' could be considered. (Student Voice is a high school student focus group process administered by the British Columbia Principals and Vice-Principals Association.)

b) Evaluation of post-secondary institution websites

To the extent that this is not already being done, post-secondary institutions might want to evaluate the user-friendliness of their websites, possibly using focus groups (virtual or in-person) of high school and post-secondary students, as well as other groups such as parents and high school and post-secondary counselors. Participants could be asked to locate specified information on the sites and then provide direct feedback on their experiences. Such evaluation could involve participants from various categories such as urban/rural, high school direct entry versus mature student, higher versus lower income.

An approach that might effectively supplement evaluations carried out by post-secondary institutions themselves could involve the same focus group reviewing the websites of a number of institutions. Further, given that websites undergo almost constant revisions, it might be valuable to establish an evaluation strategy that included reviews on a regular basis (*e.g.* every one or two years).

Appendix A: Survey Form

Date: December 6, 2002

To: Members of the BC School Counsellors Association

The BC Council on Admissions & Transfer has a project to identify the extent to which there is a need for improved information on B.C. post-secondary admissions requirements – from the point of view of both students and counsellors. It would be helpful to receive your comments on this topic, and we would thus appreciate hearing from you on issues such as the following. Note that reference to post-secondary institutions includes colleges, institutes, university colleges and universities.

1. **What are your most common sources of information on admissions requirements for B.C. post-secondary institutions? What difficulties, if any, do you experience in locating or accessing these sources?**

2. **What types of problems do your students face in locating or accessing information on admissions requirements?**

3. **Is the information on admissions requirements available at times students need it to make high school course selection decisions? If not, explain the difficulties with the timing of information.**

4. **Explain any problems you or your students have in understanding the information circulated by B.C. post-secondary institutions on their admissions requirements.**

5. **Do you or your students find the differences in admissions requirements among B.C. post-secondary institutions easy to understand? If not, explain the problems encountered.**

6. **How difficult do you or your students find keeping up with the changes in post-secondary admissions requirements?**

Any further comments or suggestions?

Completed by:

Name: _____ Position: _____
School: _____ Location: _____
Do you assist students with senior course planning? Yes __ No __

It would be appreciated if you could forward your responses to the above questions and/or general comments on this topic to me at jorum@bccat.bc.ca. If you would rather call or if it would be easier for you to respond by phone, please call me at (604) 412-7679.

Thank you for your assistance.
Jennifer Orum, Coordinator, Special Projects, BC Council on Admissions & Transfer

Appendix B: Distribution of Survey Responses

School District		School
# 6	Rocky Mountain	(Kimberley)
# 19	Revelstoke	Revelstoke Secondary School
# 20	Kootenay-Columbia	Stanley Humphries Sr. Secondary (Castlegar)
# 33	Chilliwack	Sardis Secondary
# 34	Abbotsford	Yale Secondary School
# 35	Langley	Walnut Grove Secondary
# 36	Surrey	Kwantlen Park Secondary
# 37	Delta	North Delta Sr. Secondary South Delta Secondary
# 39	Vancouver	Windermere Secondary
# 41	Burnaby	Burnaby South Secondary Moscrop Secondary
# 45	West Vancouver	West Vancouver Secondary
# 53	Okanagan Similkameen	Osoyoos Secondary
# 54	Bulkley Valley	Smithers Secondary
# 59	Peace River South	Tumbler Ridge Secondary (Dawson Creek)
# 61	Greater Victoria	Spectrum Community School
# 70	Alberni	Alberni District Secondary
# 72	Campbell River	Timberline Secondary
# 73	Kamloops/Thompson	Logan Lake Secondary Westsyde Secondary

Appendix C: Survey Responses

The following reflects input from twenty-three B.C. high school counsellors who responded to the Admissions Information Project survey December 2002 to February 2003. It also includes responses to a short follow-up survey sent in February. Each respondent's area of the province is indicated in parentheses ( ) following their input.

Question 1: What are your most common sources of information on admissions requirements for B.C. post-secondary institutions? What difficulties, if any, do you experience in locating or accessing these sources?

Responses to Q1:

- I have been using the new 'Who Offers What' posters, websites and also calendars. The difficulties that I have are that sometimes the posters and other things are not updated to include new courses. Also many of the calendars have different formats thus making them very difficult to read and share information and guidance for students. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- I tend to use the choices program first and then go online to check for any updates or changes. The difficulties are with finding the information as each calendar is so different in their layout and what they might call a service (residence/housing). *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- Use Mini Calendars and frequently loan out calendars overnight for parents and students to read together. Web based info too hard to read for kids and too time consuming. (Difficulties?) None – they get sent to me. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- I use the websites provided by the post secondary schools, the mini-calendars and view books and of course the calendars when I need details. I use openingdoors.bc.com and the 'Who Offers What' which is free. I also use "Career Cruising" which our School District buys.

  Students access admission information at the Career Resource Centre at our school. Through the CC, info on post-sec admissions in Canada and the USA, financial awards, career exploration literature, websites and computer programs, LPI, TOEFL, and SAT exams, etc. is available.

  For Gr. 12 students I publish a 26 page booklet on all of the above. Also in the booklet I include a synopsis of each lower mainland post-sec school which includes programs offered, websites, admission procedures and requirements and general info about that school. Also, for grade 12 students, I publish a monthly newsletter called "Student Futures" which includes features on post-secondary school requirements and expectations, an article on careers, the best websites, what could I do with a degree in …, apprenticeship or tech. trades, careers, etc.

  I also visit English/Communication 12 classes to advertise important dates such as application due dates for colleges, post-secondary evening programs, or our school sitting for the LIP etc. – this is to make sure all the students (however resistant) will hear and receive notice on what they need to do to graduate and access what is offered to them after high school.

  We (admin. Grad event coordinators and myself) do an evening for grade 12 parents in early October to explain all the things grade 12's need to get done. This evening includes post-secondary school and awards. Our school website also has an updated "Student Futures", a "Career Cruising" career exploration test, and a copy of Career Planner 2002/2003 for parent and student use.

  For the other grades (grade 10 is especially important) the counselling dept. and myself go into Science 10 classes and the counsellor explains what courses and choices students need to make to graduate. The career centre becomes extremely busy with questions such as "what science should I take if I want to be a lab technologist, or go to UBC, or go to college, or apprenticeship, or do I need to take a TOEFL…?" Post-Secondary Evening (we choose the evening session because parents can

come with their student) is a terrific source of info on admissions for students. They choose 3 schools to attend over 2 hours and receive info (viewbooks, websites, personal questions answered) on each of those schools.

(Difficulties?) The only difficulties I experience is with the USA websites. I find a lot of them to be difficult to navigate and lack of information for international students. It is still worth the cost of buying "Choices USA". Post-Secondary school websites are starting to be easier to navigate so this year I anticipate less problems for students. I personally love cruising on my computer for new post-secondary info and sights. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Hard copy/calendar/websites and counsellor days for BC PSIs; internet websites for all others. (Difficulties?) Websites for individual institutions can often be frustrating. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- College and university calendars, their websites, and their education advisors. (Difficulties?) None. *(Greater Victoria)*

- Calendars and pamphlets have been most commonly used. We are starting to use Opening Doors. (Difficulties?) No problems. *(Southern Interior)*

- I use Choices as my primary source, as well as PSI Calendars and Opening Doors. (Difficulties?) No difficulties. Choices is an extensive resource. Whenever I'm in doubt, I go to the PSI's Website. *(Central Interior)*

- University and college calendars, internet, Choices. (Difficulties?) Can't get current calendars, difficulty with finding information on the websites. *(Southern interior)*

- Sources of info are calendars and school presentations as well as campus visits. Difficulties: would like a comprehensive handout that includes general entrance requirements that could be used for a ready reference. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- I look at the current calendars or use the web-sites of each individual institution. I also make a chart of requirements each year using a spreadsheet. Because I live in Langley, I include UBC, SFU, UVIC, UNBC in one cart and Kwantlen, UCFV, Douglas, Emily Carr, BCIT, Langara, and Capilano in another. (Difficulties?) I always keep one copy of each calendar as a reference and usually use pas.bc.ca or the online transfer guide to quickly find links to BC colleges and universities. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- University/College Calendars, Websites. Some colleges/universities don't send calendars out or send them specifically to us. No problem with websites, just getting the time to access them and informing students of this option. *(Southern Interior)*

- BC Postsecondary institutions, colleges. No difficulties. I call or email if I need to. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Mailings from PSI's, viewbooks, calendars, websites, conferences. No difficulties. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- A publications series called the Spectrum. There is a book on western provinces, Atlantic and Ontario. This has basic info on programs offered at colleges and some details for admissions. From there we go to the college calendar, website or call the admissions dept. at the school. The school in question has the most accurate info. This is the best resource I have found and I purchase it every year through the guidance centre in Ontario. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- Going to post-secondary days offered for counsellors. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Calendars, websites, Western Spectrum. Sometimes we are not given enough calendars per counsellor; students are getting more comfortable using websites but many are still uncomfortable with this. *(Vancouver Island)*

- My most common source of information is the web and secondly, some post secondary schools send a brief synopsis…a secondary counsellor's guide to requirements that I find very helpful. (Difficulties?) Slow, old technology. *(Southern Interior)*

- University websites not user friendly. Too much information – there are links to everything conœivable, but hard to navigate and takes too much time to find what you're looking for. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- As a counsellor, I regularly attend the InfoSessions from the BC universities "road-team" when they visit in early October to get briefed on major changes to postsecondary requirements at the major post-secondary universities & BCIT (i.e. UBC, SFU, OUC, UVIC, UNBC). These are useful. However, I almost exclusively use the www.openingdoorsbc.com website with students and parents and show them how to use this website (the site is also listed on the back cover of the "Guide to Graduates" pamphlet from the Ministry given to Grade 12's each fall.)

  Many of our students are interested in the Alberta post-secondary institutions because we are as close to Calgary as we are to Vancouver; however, I am not very helpful with this information. E.g. I can help students with the registrations process to UofA, U of C, SAIT or NAIT, but I can't even speculate on how well our local college (Selkirk) courses will transfer to the Alberta institutions. I definitely refer these students to the college counsellors and recommend use of the Alberta post-secondary institution websites to ask questions. *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- Mailed notices from the institution, calendar (hard to get!!!), on line when possible (our system is very, very slow, some e-mail distribution. (Difficulties?) We cannot get enough up to date calendars most of the time since we are lucky if *they use one or (?)* some institutions now want to charge us and we have no budget for that. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- We contact all the universities in September each year to obtain updated admissions information, including information on the GPA cutoffs for admission to various Faculties/Programs for the current September term. The universities don't send out their admissions information (including GPA cutoffs) until later in the year. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Common source of information? The web sites for each as well as the small student handbooks that each of the major institutions now publish. I particularly like the large fold out that BCIT publishes. Having everything on a page at a glance is very convenient. I also like the information circulars published by the colleges and universities. They point out information that could otherwise be missed just looking on the web site.

  (Difficulties?) I can generally find what I want but it would be more convenient if they all used a standardized system of categorizing information and displaying it. *(Vancouver Island)*

Question 2: What types of problems do your students face in locating or accessing information on admissions requirements?

Responses to Q2:

- Some of the problems include the same as I face. The guides are often difficult to interpret. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- It is very cumbersome to search for the information. Sometimes information is written in a student handout or on an application form but not necessarily in the calendar. *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- Too lazy to read – they like the minis because they're quick and straightforward. Web is too big for many of them. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- I usually see students who don't have a clue and are just starting their search for careers, post-sec schools and their admission requirements or I see students who have gone on the web and are having problems locating web info. I also see students who are in any phase of discovering what path they want to travel. Some students will pop in to have a question answered and then pop in the following week to have another question answered.

  Most of the information on the web is complex and it takes awhile to understand where to find what you want. Problems include not understanding the university/college lingo (I get questions such as what is a transcript, PEN number, what do they mean 30 credits or 15 units, what is upper and lower divisions, LPI and TOEFL questions, etc.) Students are confused by the expected procedures from the post-sec schools (how to apply, how to self-report grades, how to register, why do I have to take English etc.?) Also the expected prerequisite GPA to get into some schools keeps going up – universities are certainly getting the brightest students! *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Sometimes the information can be confusing, especially if it is their first time trying to read a university calendar. *(Greater Victoria)*

- We've put extra copies of all calendars in the library which is making it easier for students to access. We also encourage them to check the online calendars. The librarian has put links for many of the more popular ones on the computers. *(Southern Interior)*

- They don't always know the most efficient places to look. They often go the calendars, which are the least friendly resource for admissions requirements. They are all familiar with the calendar resources, however, and use them frequently. *(Central Interior)*

- Difficult time understanding the post sec "jargon" that they are unfamiliar with, not knowing where to start their search for information. Difficulty in contacting someone who will give specific answers to questions, rather than just referring to new location on a website. *(Southern Interior)*

- We have a career planning centre that looks after most of the inquiries about admissions but I need a quick reference. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- The single biggest reason the students have difficulty is that they view the maze of information as "too difficult to understand" rather than acting like a "curious detective." Some students also find it overwhelming as they are not used to exploring and researching information in a variety of ways. They are also reluctant to put in the time (and notation) that it takes to get the information. The jargon used to describe pre-requisites, credits, co-requisites, etc. is not consistent between institutions. I make up an alphabetical list of "post-secondary institution terms" for students and parents to use. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- Cutbacks to counselling time in our school have left students searching for days for a counsellor who will help them access admissions requirements; often the written material (calendars) is simply given to the student to borrow and then the student goes away, searches and comes back later with questions. *(Southern Interior)*

- They usually do better after the Post-Secondary Liaison Day where the advisors run them through the viewbooks etc. They find it frustrating that the universities can't give them a 'firm' answer on the exact percent they require for entrance to the various faculties. Their greatest weakness is in understanding the differences among the university requirements and among the different faculties. Also the difference between university and university-college entrance policies. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- I teach them how to locate during CAPP 11. Lack of time available would be the major problem. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- Difficulty navigating websites (especially UBC). *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Sometimes the calendars for colleges and universities read like a bible and are difficult for students to follow and interpret. Decision making for them is often difficult… they like to be told what the info is more than not. *(Vancouver Island)*

- Working in a rural school our students are underexposed to technology both at school and at home. Our technology is slow, frustrating and poorly maintained, therefore students give up quickly when trying to answer their questions. *(Southern Interior)*

- Same problem with university websites as outlined in question 1. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Students applying directly to universities in BC tend to be ok using the openingdoors website. But, because the majority of our students will begin 1st year UT programs at Selkirk College, I then refer those students to the Selkirk College counsellors directly. I also show them how the transfer guide might be used by a college counsellor before sending them off to make an appointment. I regularly talk with the Selkirk College counsellors and continue to believe that referrals to them is best for now.

  I do hear vague complaints and 'stories' that students transferring from Selkirk College to the universities have had difficulty with transfer credit, but I believe that in most cases the students either (a) hadn't done enough research on which courses could transfer or (b) didn't consider that they might not get into the university they want and hadn't looked at a second or third alternative. *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- Not all our students have computers available at home or the skill to do a good search and if we don't have the hard copy for them to look at it can make things difficult. Also not all the sites are regularly updated or some of the headings don't work or are poorly laid out. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Students tend to get a large amount of incorrect information about admissions from parents and other students. There are many 'myths' and incorrect 'beliefs' circulating, and this misinformation is persistent, even when correct information is provided to them by the school. It is as important that parents are given accurate admissions info, as it is to have the students well informed. Generally students and parents believe that GPA cutoffs for admission to the universities are higher than they actually are.

  Students generally like the university websites, although there needs to be other forms of information available for students who don't use websites in their research. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Some students find the web sites hard to negotiate – again a standardized style would simplify it for them. *(Vancouver Island)*

Question 3: Is the information on admissions requirements available at times students need it to make high school course selection decisions? If not, explain the difficulties with the timing of the information.

Responses to Q3:

- The information comes at a good time. Some calendars are a bit late, but generally it is easy to share the information with others! *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- Our students use the Choices program before we do course selection so they have an opportunity to see what the requirements are and plan accordingly. *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- Schools bring info when they do their visits which is often AFTER the App dates for Colleges. I'd like to have new minis right on September 5th for our keen Gr 12. The requirements are changing and it's tough to use old material when the kids start asking in September. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Yes, info is very available and we certainly try to time presentations appropriately. It is a waste of our time if we don't! *(Greater Vancouver)*

- The information is available but students need to be encouraged to be thinking a year and a half ahead – in grade 11. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- Generally speaking yes; although a couple of times a change was made in the spring for the following September and we only found out by accident. *(Greater Victoria)*

- Yes, as long as admission requirements do not significantly change. We try to encourage them to keep all options open in case of changes though. *(Southern Interior)*

- Usually it's available. Most PSI's provide current print info in the Fall, when it's needed most. When info can't be found, and they ask for help, we direct them to Choices, which is updated in good time (usually September). *(Central Interior)*

- It is usually available, but students are not always ready to look for the information or ask the right questions. *(Southern Interior)*

- Not always. Sometimes institutions change requirements from one year to the next. I think it would be more helpful if they would give two years of lead-time in order that students can choose their courses. Sometimes students are struggling to meet a science or language requirement only to find that it is dropped. Other times students discover that they need higher marks in subjects. Most students make their subject choices in Feb/March of their grade 10 year so two or three year lead time on changes would help them. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- Yes. *(Southern Interior)*

- Yes. This information is given to students in January/February of their grade 10 and grade 11 year. If/when they forget, they see the counsellor and refer to the information booklet put out by the school district. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Yes. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- Yes. I also go to CAPP 10 classes to discuss this, and they get time in class to research requirements. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- I believe so. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Yes. *(Vancouver Island)*

- Often students begin planning in grade 10 and 11. So, if a change is implemented in their last year etc. it may be hard to address it. *(Southern Interior)*

- The information is normally available in a timely way, but many students don't take school counsellors' advice to start their research early. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- If calendars or info does arrive it's often not until spring and the students make their course selections in January and February. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Grade 12 students should have information on GPA cutoffs at the beginning of their final high school year – in September. The post-secondary institutions tend to circulate it to schools later in the year. Items such as how the admissions averages are calculated need to be dealt with when students are in Grade 10. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Things change and sometimes we are not informed but major announcements are fairly well done with memos to counsellors so usually we have the information that we need. *(Vancouver Island)*

***Question 4:* Explain any problems you or your students have in understanding the information circulated by B.C. post-secondary institutions on their admissions requirements.**

Responses to Q4:

- Sometimes the information from BC institutions is that the admissions are not clearly laid out for the different facilities. *(North-eastern B.C.)*
- Students have generally been able to understand the extra information circulated by the schools. If not, they come to counselling to have it interpreted. *(South-eastern B.C.)*
- None. *(Greater Vancouver)*
- See answer to Question 2. *(Greater Vancouver)*
- No problems. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*
- See answer to question 2. *(Greater Victoria)*
- Each calendar is set up differently, so it is often difficult to pinpoint requirements. Students have also come back to say that specific courses will often have prerequisites that weren't listed in the program requirements section. *(Southern Interior)*
- No problems. They're pretty clear. *(Central Interior)*
- Sometimes the information is not laid out in the calendars in a very logical order, causing students to look at various spots on the web or in the calendars. Charts and bold headings seem to work the best. *(Southern Interior)*
- The University of Alberta uses a chart that makes it easy to understand. I think that it would be helpful if all of the institutions would submit their requirements to BCCAT so that one organizing body could prepare a chart that would be available on-line or distributed to schools. I think that the guide-books are helpful bit it would be easier for students if admission requirements were on the inside cover rather than embedded somewhere in the booklet. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*
- None. *(Southern Interior)*
- Second language requirements and waivers. English proficiency requirements and testing (LPI, TOEFL, CPT-UCFV). *(Lower Fraser Valley)*
- I don't use the book that is distributed. The calendars are very straightforward and I also teach my 11's how to read them. I always double check with students to ensure they read it correctly. *(North-eastern B.C.)*
- Sometimes printed information is subject to change. *(Greater Vancouver)*
- Would seem that the hands on, mini-booklets providing a brief synopsis are the way to go. Simple to use and easy to understand. *(Southern Interior)*
- The two largest problems:

  (a) students have difficulty understanding university credit systems.

  (b) they have problems understanding that the percentage required for admission is not known until after the application for admission deadline. They can be confused with the term 'conditional

acceptance', focusing on the word 'acceptance', rather than realizing the nature of the 'conditions'. Universities need to do more to make it clear that early admission does not necessarily mean that a student will receive final admission, based on the entering average cutoff determined in August. (Example: UVic includes a warning with early admissions that refers to the possibility that a student will not actually have their admission confirmed – but it is in very small print.)

These problems don't need to be major, and can be dealt with if properly 'trained' personnel work with the students. Concern that CAPP is sometimes taught by teachers who don't have the skills or interest. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- A clearly laid out grid would be much better than paragraphs of writing with ten * to indicate that there are restrictions etc. *(Greater Vancouver)*
- Information is fine, but when GPA cutoffs are given, they should include more than one year so students can see trends – and to realize the requirements can change year to year, both up and down. *(Greater Vancouver)*
- There can be some confusion when investigating a program that has prerequisite programs such as teaching. They also need some assistance understanding that once they know the courses required for a prerequisite program, the high school courses required to enter the prerequisite courses. *(Vancouver Island)*

Question 5: Do you or your students find the differences in admissions requirements among B.C. post-secondary institutions easy to understand? If not, explain the problems encountered.

Responses to Q5:

- They are mostly easy to understand once you find them! *(North-eastern B.C.)*
- The differences are easy to understand whether they need PH11 at one school but not at another. Understanding why there are admission differences for the same program (BSc) is more difficult. *(South-eastern B.C.)*
- Students find the exceptions hard sometimes and require explanations. *(Greater Vancouver)*
- Every school is different and has different expectations but there are common threads when it comes to 'course' admission requirements – such as, to enter Engineering a student needs English 12, Math 12, Physics 12 and Chemistry 12. This is consistent for most universities (except for UVIC) or 1st year engineering at a college. More post-sec programs have common threads to make senior course grade 11 and 12 planning relevant. *(Greater Vancouver)*
- Yes. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*
- Few problems with figuring it out. *(Greater Victoria)*
- Generally not a problem. Sometimes confused about prerequisites when starting at college then transferring to university. Do they still need a language 11 for example. *(Southern Interior)*
- No problem. The students are clear about most aspects of PSI Admission, as we make a point of teaching about admissions in the CAPP 12 program, which all students take all year long in our school. I anticipate more confusion once CAPP 12 is dropped from the grad requirements. *(Central Interior)*

- Generally they find them easy to accept the differences, but don't always understand why they are different. *(Southern Interior)*

- I wish there were set requirements for all institutions that were the same. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- One of the problems is that students often do not know what they specifically want to study when they are in grade 10 and 11. When they see requirements for various faculties that are different from each other it is confusing. The jargon is also unique to each institution. It would be helpful if all faculties except Science and Engineering had the same first year admission requirements. By the time the student has started their studies, in first year of an institution, they find it easier to sort out the requirements for 2nd year and beyond. This could likely be due to the fact that they have more years of education (grade 10, 11 and 12, plus 1st year), more maturity, and are more focused on their learning. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- Differentiation between Applied Courses and General Courses (*i.e.* Math); a lot of why questions from students. *(Southern Interior)*

- Yes. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- I keep forgetting the changes in SFU's entrance requirements. That 4th grade 12 course is hard to pick up when students make course changes throughout the year. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- Very easy to understand. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- Easy enough, but I always need to look it up to be sure (mind you, I'm new at this!) *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Yes, it's easy enough to understand, but there is a variety of admission standards even between the universities, never mind the colleges. *(Vancouver Island)*

- Due to the overwhelming amount of information on universities and colleges, students are advised to go directly to post-secondary institution material/websites. They don't always follow through. Previously, West Vancouver Secondary published a booklet on admissions info on lower mainland post secondary institutions, but does not do so any more due to both cost and the fact that there is too much information to summarize. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Admissions standards vary so much that it does get them confused and listed % vs. actual admission % are at time worlds apart. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Students generally understand the differing requirements because we go over it with them several times. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Yes, it is hard enough for counsellors to keep each institution and each program within the institution clear, for students it can be very difficult. I guess that is one of the reasons we offer counseling services to students. *(Vancouver Island)*

Question 6: How difficult do you or your students find keeping up with the changes in post-secondary admissions requirements?

Responses to Q6:

- Changes in requirements seem to be fairly slow moving so the changes are usually quite noticeable when they take place. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- Our students have a comprehensive CAPP program which has them checking the requirements at least once a year beginning in grade 10 and carrying on to Grade 12. There hasn't been a huge number of requirement changes so we seem to be able to keep up. *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- Changes coming rapidly now and it is good to have reports coming directly from the institutions as they occur. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- It is difficult to keep ahead of all the subtle changes required by all the different schools so one must be a 'reader' – read the counsellor's updates, go to the counsellor's information days, and network so you can be an advocate for your students. Some changes make sense, some well… *(Greater Vancouver)*

- It is not difficult. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- We try to keep all information in the files with the application forms when it is sent to us, but with students being encouraged to apply online, we don't always check the file. *(Southern Interior)*

- As a counsellor, I keep up to date effectively, through the grad program listserv and the regular mailings our school receives directly from the PSI's. *(Central Interior)*

- It is not too bad, but sometimes I think it would be a good idea for all institutions to send out changes together so they are all available at once. (I know this will not happen though.) *(Southern Interior)*

- I don't have time to research new changes all the time and would like a mail-out sent each year of an update of all institutions and their requirements on one page. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- It is definitely very time-consuming. Parents and students expect the counsellors to be current in their knowledge. I spend quite a lot of time pouring over calendars and phoning the advisors to "double-check" my facts. That's why I think that one organizing body could help by making a chart that's easy to understand. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- This semester especially has been difficult because of the cutbacks to counselling time in our school; it is extremely difficult trying to stay ahead of the change information for students, in fact, impossible this year. *(Southern Interior)*

- Not too bad unless they get advice from older siblings who entered under other criteria. The universities usually give ample notice; our local university-college is less far-thinking. *(Lower Fraser Valley)*

- It isn't difficult since most of them forward info on the changes. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- Challenging. It would be nice if there was ONE website that was continually updated by the institutions that we could access. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- We receive updated publications and are updated by our principal and the ministry… so no real problems. *(Vancouver Island)*

- At this point some are still not clear on the fifth course considered by SFU and why a beginner second language is OK for SFU but not UBC etc. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- For the general admission requirements, I can usually be current. For any specialized programs, usually check them either on the web or in the small student handbooks they now publish. *(Vancouver Island)*

Final Question: Any further comments or suggestions?

Responses to Final Question:

- More of the posters and that type of promotional material helps. Also I like the Alberta system where they have counsellor updates which allow area counsellors to learn about new programs. We do not have those in the Peace River area. I think if we did they would help to promote the schools better. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- It would be great to see a summarized admission requirement chart that contained the information for all of BC PS institutes. Maybe the schools need to formalize consistent admission requirements. Alberta PSI has created an application deadline chart which we have posted for students. This would also be helpful for BC institutes. *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- 'TIPS' is a great resource. Final GPA available on line after the close of semester from the various institutions would be helpful. I like to have the BCCAT book for quick reference rather than doing a search on the web. How do I get an updated one? I do an info/search session with kids in the lab in the spring for those planning on doing a transfer and the online is great but the book is better for quick reference and to do a backwards search. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- Seriously, there are so many changes and expectations set out by the post-secondary schools for our students. Counsellors have enough work dealing with students in grades 8-12. Each high school needs a career centre and a career advisor – this will be especially important with the new grad requirements. Our school centre is a 'happening place' and our students are very well prepared. Leaving grade 12 is just as important as entering kindergarten. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- We're very concerned about keeping Grade 12's informed after CAPP 12 disappears. *(Central Interior)*

- Make a strong push for renewed counselling time to help students make the right choices at the right time with the right information. *(Southern Interior)*

- Concern with the new high school graduation requirements and the early 'streaming effect' it will have. Students' course decisions in Grade 10, made about what to take in Grade 11 will be very crucial. Students will have to commit to a path too early. It is very hard to get students to do the research they need to do in Grade 10, to assist them in planning for post-secondary by selecting courses that will meet admission requirements. Students tend to think they can leave this work until the last minute, in Grade 12. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- I would benefit from one more piece of general information (from year to year). I'd really like to be able to give students/parents information on "how well" or "how easily" do students transfer from local colleges UT programs to other BC universities/colleges etc. For example, if a Grade 12 student were accepted at Selkirk (which is easy) as well as UBC (which is more competitive), should the student accept the spot at UBC just in case they can't transfer well into 2nd year at UBC. Financially, it's typically better for students to stay at Selkirk for one year (if able to live at home), but many students/parents worry they might be giving up an opportunity which may be denied later. I'd like to be able to provide better information in this area to help with these decisions. I've talked with the college counsellors about this question and they can give me their experiences and recollections, but I wouldn't mind more actual data. *(South-eastern B.C.)*

- Post-sec institutions need to communicate much, frequently and in depth with secondary schools and provide us with more support. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- At our school we prepare a chart with admissions information, and this is used as a template by all the secondary schools in the District. It would be wonderful if such a resource were produced on a provincial level, since this would prevent each school/area from having to contact each of the universities/colleges to get updates. A central resource, providing comparative information in a standardized format would make it easier for students and their parents, as well as secondary school counsellors and post-secondary admissions/recruiting/counselling staff. *(Greater Vancouver)*

Admissions Information Follow-up Survey

Question 1: A number of counselors indicated they and their students use the www.openingdoorsbc.com website. To what extent does this resource, which includes information on institutional and program admission requirements, meet the need for a coordinated information source?

Responses to Q1:

- I do use openingdoorsbc.com but I find some of the information rather difficult to use in some cases. I have tried another site called careercruising.com that is much easier to use! Opening doors is there but not as comprehensive. I have enjoyed the poster though the Who has what one! *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- I am impressed that www.openingdoorsbc.com has access to all programs, but school personnel have found problems with printing. The 'printer user-friendly' version is not so friendly, not allowing printing of a full page. Also, it doesn't seem possible to print just selected pages– it prints all pages. For the past two years, our school's Course Selection Guide has included reference to www.openingdoorsbc.com. Our purpose is to put responsibility onto students to do their own research. Students are often not motivated to do this, and they often seem to prefer to talk to a counsellor and expect to be given the answers. *(Greater Vancouver)*

Question 2: Do you think that some form of province-wide summary/chart that provides integrated descriptions of admissions requirements would be a useful addition to the admissions information currently available? If so, what form do you think this should take?

Responses to Q2:

- A provincial summary sheet would be excellent as I do not have the time being the only counsellor to spend sifting through each place for requirements. It would be nice to have an up to date resource that was easy to use. It could be one on line, etc- it would also be helpful if it had deadlines on it for entrance to programs etc.. Guaranteed admission averages etc. *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- Our high school previously issued students a short summary of admissions requirements for schools that most of the students attended (e.g. UBC, SFU, UVIC, Capilano College, VCC, ECIAD, BCIT). We stopped doing it two years ago since information was always changing and it took too much time and energy to produce. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- I like the proposal for a summary chart on admissions requirements to BC post-secondary institutions, but it will only work if it is kept updated. The advantages of such information would be 'overwhelming'. It could be put on the openingdoorsbc website as a downloadable pdf version. *(Greater Vancouver)*

Question 3: Any other comments regarding the advantages of a more coordinated approach to post-secondary admissions information?

Responses to Q3:

- In the last survey I recommended some kind of counsellor update similar to the ones that Alberta does. At the end of February, for example, Alberta institutions are coming, my kids can ask questions, I can get new updated info and talk with them directly. As well, they have counsellor updates at colleges all over the province that we can attend so we can hear about new programs, ask questions and pick up materials to help students.

  Another area that would be nice to learn more about would be scholarship programs for students. There is so much information out there it would be nice to give students more assistance in that area, especially considering that tuition fees are once again on the rise! *(North-eastern B.C.)*

- University websites are not user friendly. For example, we have used UBC's website to search for admissions information on behalf of students. We found general admission information for first year Science, but then found we had to search through the course requirements for first year, and then each individual course to identify pre-requisites for various first year courses, and then each individual course to identify pre-requisites for various first year courses such as Mathematics (which can be different from general admission requirements. I think hard copy UBC information is more user-friendly. *(Greater Vancouver)*

- I definitely agree that it is too time consuming to get all the new info in a singular manner. Opening Doors would be fine, but why not attach it to PASBC ? All the suggestions were better than what we do now !!